

## **H. B. (Pete) Petereit**

### **Becomers Mystery Person of the week - December 10, 2006**

About one year old parents had picture taken and it was entered into a contest. This picture won first prize, a Hollywood screen test. However you had to provide your own transportation to Hollywood, at the peak of the Depression—fat chance!

In 1946, as entertainment for the audience at a Jr. High assembly, the faculty ran a best looking student leg contest. The nominees were lined up across the stage with the curtain raised only high enough to reveal legs. The audience voted by applause and when the winner was determined and the curtain raised all the way up, Pete, the only male, was the winner.

In the spring of 1947 Pete was a member of his Jr. High track team. At the All City meet the last event of the day was the high jump; all other events were finished. At the stadium all the spectators moved over to the high jump area. At that moment the event was down to two participants. If Pete won, his team would win the City Championship. If Pete got second place, his team would be second in the City Championship. If the other participant, won it would not do anything for his team, but he would set a City record. At this moment Pete cleared the next height and his opponent missed three times and was out. Pete's school went crazy, as they knew they had the City Championship (kind of discouraging for the person who just missed). But the event was not over, Pete cleared the next height. Then at the second new height, he missed three times, but his best height was the new record. The second placer that day went on to set all high jump records at his college and college league. He also became an Olympic alternate, but at that time, before he graduated from college, he was better known for his four gold records (He was Johnnie Mathis.)

That same spring, Pete was selected because of his acrobatic abilities to participate in the 1947 Bohemian Club 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary production. This involved flying like Peter Pan. It was a little more complicated than the angels at the Glories, as the production was held on an outdoor stage in the Redwood Forest and all the rigging was done in trees. The movement (across the stage) was manually done rather than electrical and the flyers had to do turns in the air. During the final week of rehearsals, Pete got to have lunch with ex-President, Herbert Hoover.

The following year, the United Nations was established in Pete's home town of San Francisco. Possibly because of the San Francisco location of the establishment of the UN, Pete was chosen to give a fifteen minute talk on the radio program, "Town Meeting of the Air". The subject that was assigned was UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, & Cultural Organization).

At the end of the first semester of High School, at the awards assembly, the Vice Principle presented an award that he said was not give often. The male recipients had to meet three requirements: earn a Varsity letter in sport, be a Student Body Officer, and be eligible to graduate with Academic Honors. At that moment Pete promised himself, he would do all three. He did!

In college Pete switched athletics to Gymnastics. Won a varsity letter as a Freshman. It was not done again at UC Berkeley till eighteen years later.

He joined the Air Force as an Aviation Cadet. He went through Navigation and Airborne Electronics Countermeasure Schools. Was also trained as back-up bombardier, which included training on how to arm the atomic bomb. He finished the military as a helicopter pilot in the National Guard.

His working career spans three industries: pumps, electronic/computers, and electrical. He has been speaker at various National Trade Association Conventions. He has given technical

presentations at every NASA facility in the US. He has been President of three Corporations, for profit, and one, for non-profit.. One was written up by INC magazine as the fastest growing, privately held Corporation in the US. He finished his career, during the last nine years, giving seminars on specific electrical engineering subjects. And he finally retired recently at 73 1/2 years of age.

During his career he wrote an engineering manual on Hydro-pneumatics and developed a never before known, original, engineering formula. He also invented a patented product (Cyclone Separator) that is sold worldwide.

In the early 1960's he was very active in volunteer work and received a statewide Community Service Award. This led to a little notoriety and he was asked to be guest speaker at many Service Clubs and he crowned a couple of Football Bowl Queens on national TV. In 1964 he went to a National Convention in Detroit, Michigan. One of the Speakers was George Romney, former President of American Motors (Nash) and then Governor of Michigan and a candidate for President. He was selected to make the presentation of a gift from the Governor of his state to the Governor of Michigan.

In 1980 he and his college sweetheart got back together. They share everything, there is no his or hers. Between them they have seven children, thirteen grandchildren, and one great grandchild. Boats, recreational vehicles and travel have been a big part of their lives. They have been to every continent together except Antarctica. To control high blood pressure he took up running, but work was a conflict. Now, with retirement, he is back into running and hopes to combine the RV with competitive racing.